

Success Case: Developmental and Emotional Progress through Access to Psychological Services at Zinxhiraj Community Center

A 10-year-old child diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder was referred to the Zinxhiraj Community Center due to persistent challenges in communication, social interaction, and emotional regulation. At the initial stage, the child demonstrated limited functional verbal communication, struggled to interpret social cues, and relied heavily on rigid routines. Any deviation from familiar structures often triggered intense emotional reactions, including distress and withdrawal, limiting the child's participation in both social and educational settings.

Through regular and structured access to psychological services at the center, the child benefited from a comprehensive and individualized intervention plan. This included weekly counseling sessions, evidence-informed behavioral strategies, structured play therapy, and continuous guidance for family members to reinforce progress at home. The collaborative approach between professionals and the family ensured consistency in the child's developmental environment.

The intervention focused on strengthening core areas such as functional communication, emotional awareness, and adaptive social behaviors. Gradually, the child began to show increased engagement during sessions, improved responsiveness to guidance, and greater willingness to participate in structured interactions. Over time, measurable progress became evident: the child improved in initiating and maintaining simple conversations, demonstrated increased tolerance toward changes in routine, and developed more effective strategies for managing emotional responses.

Additionally, the child showed enhanced participation in guided group activities and early signs of independence in daily functioning. These improvements not only benefited the child but also





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reduced stress for the family, who reported feeling more supported and equipped to manage challenges.

This case highlights the fundamental importance of accessible, ongoing psychological services within the community. Early identification and continuous intervention are key factors in supporting children with developmental challenges. The availability of such services at the community level ensures that children and their families receive timely, consistent, and context-sensitive support.

Ultimately, this example demonstrates how sustained access to specialized psychosocial services can significantly improve developmental outcomes, social inclusion, and overall well-being.

The beneficiary's name has been changed to protect privacy.

This success story was realized as part of the project **“Strengthening the Capacities of the Zinxhira Community Social Center to Provide Specialized and Comprehensive Services to Communities in Need in Gjirokastër”**, implemented by the Municipality of Gjirokastër in partnership with **IRCA**, as part of the **“EU for Social Care”** program, funded by the European Union and implemented by **UNICEF Albania** and **World Vision Albania**, in cooperation with the Ministry of Health and Social Protection.

